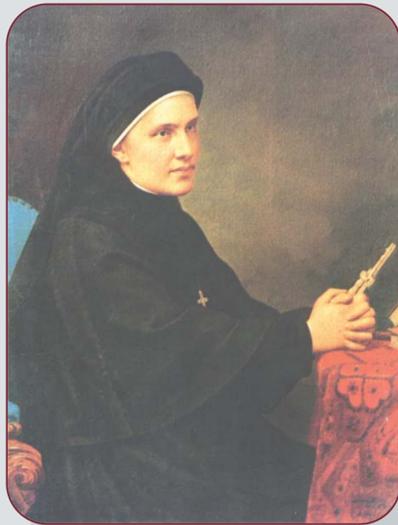


FOUNDATIONS IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth



The Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth was founded in Poland by Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd, Frances Siedliska.

Mother Frances Siedliska

Founding the Congregation

Born 12 November 1842, Frances Siedliska was a Polish noble woman who decided to relinquish her wealthy lifestyle and become a religious in the 1860s.

Following the directives of her spiritual director, Mother Siedliska went to Rome in 1873 to obtain a Papal blessing for her intended Congregation. Later that year, on the first Sunday of Advent, the Congregation officially commenced.

Based upon the ideal of the life of the Holy Family, Mother Siedliska encouraged the Sisters to live a simple community life of work, hospitality and charity. In answering the call, the Sisters ministered in education, religious instruction, health care, social services, pastoral ministry and other needs of the Church.

Mother Siedliska's hope for an international community had started to materialise at the time of her death in 1902 at which time there were 29 foundations – 20 of which were in the United States of America, the other nine in Europe.



The first Sisters in Perth with Mother Godwin, the first Provincial

Following her death there was even more expansion into the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Israel and Australia. Today, the Australian Sisters can be found in Marayong (New South Wales), Brisbane (Queensland) and North Beach (Western Australia).

Arrival in Western Australia

The Sisters' arrival in Western Australia dates back to 12 December 1957 and a request from the Polish clergy for them to assist Polish migrants assimilate into Australian society while also maintaining their Catholic faith, Polish language and culture.

Relocating from North America, the four Sisters arrived to a residence in Charles Street, North Perth, purchased for them by the Polish Community.

All possessing university degrees, the four pioneer Sisters were bilingual, speaking both English and Polish. They ministered to the Polish migrants in several ways, including a weekday nursery for 3–5 years olds, weekend Polish language and culture classes and summer camps for the children.

The Polish classes commenced in February 1958 at two centres in Rivervale and Bassendean. Classes continued until 1960 at the centres and then until 1965 at a number of different locations.

Similarly, 1958 was also the first year that the Sisters ran their summer camp at Bickley. Providing the children with a range of fun outdoor activities, as well as Polish singing and dancing and spiritual preparation for the sacraments, the camps were successfully operated until 1964.

Catholic education

Given their qualifications in education, Archbishop Prendiville requested that the Sisters consider administering schools. As a result of this request, the Sisters established an association with Our Lady of Grace School in North Beach and St Teresa's School in Gwelup during April and May of 1960.

Unfortunately, low enrolments at St Teresa's saw the school close at the end of the year, however, Sr Adria Wijas continued to operate the nursery while the other three Sisters travelled to North Beach daily to teach. The trip from Charles Street to North Beach continued until 1964 when the convent on Kitchener Street (North Beach) was built.

A long running challenge associated with Our Lady of Grace School was the maintenance of a building program and the extension of facilities that could accommodate 600 students.

On 25 June 2004, the Most Reverend Bishop Donald Sproxtton blessed and opened the stage five developments that are helping to address the challenge. Later in the year the school celebrated its 50th Anniversary.

Sr Jean and students from Mater Dei College

Our Lady of Good Counsel

The other Perth school with which the Sisters have an association is Our Lady of Good Counsel School in Karrinyup, opened by the Congregation in February 1965 in response to a request from the Most Reverend Bishop Miles McKeon.

Sisters Boniface and Brigid were the first teachers at the school that Bishop McKeon officially blessed and opened, along with the Parish of Karrinyup, in May of the same year. Ten years later in 1975, the Sisters withdrew from the school that has been administered by lay staff ever since.

Continuing the ministry

In 2005, three Sisters continued to reside at North Beach, ministering to the Our Lady of Grace and Mater Dei College communities.

Sister Irene is a pastoral assistant and joint coordinator of Nazareth Care, a house of prayer and hospitality for members of the Our Lady of Grace Parish. Working with vicar, Judy Rosam, Sr Irene helps coordinate several other groups in the Parish including the Adoration Group, Nazareth Care Library, various prayer groups, children's Catechism classes and the Post Baptism Support Group. She also prepares students for the sacraments, is a regular visitor to the sick and lonely and is part of the Learning Assistant Program at Our Lady of Grace School.

Sr Joseph teaches Year 3 at Our Lady of Grace School. She participates in weekly prayer with older youth of the Parish and assists with the school's Rainbows Program. She is also enrolled at the University of Notre Dame in Fremantle where she is studying counselling part-time.

Sr Jean returned to Western Australia in the role of Careers Development Officer and teacher at Mater Dei College. At the time she was also looking forward to continuing her secretarial studies through TAFE.



The Sisters' arrival in Perth, greeted by the Polish community



The Congregation in 2005

THE MODERN CONGREGATION

In 2005 there were 27 professed Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth across Australia, forming the Province of the Holy Spirit. The community comprises Sisters from Australia, the Philippines, Poland and the United States – an indication of the internationality and unity within the Australian Church.

The mission of the Holy Family of Nazareth is to build the Kingdom of God by living a life of simplicity, work and prayer – reflecting that of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

The congregation continues to meet the needs of the Church as it ministers to families in the areas of childcare, nursing, teaching, pastoral care, study and prayer.